

Determinants of Citizens' Perceptions of Police–Community Cooperation in India: Implications for Community Policing

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Abstract In this study, we examine citizens' perceptions of police–community relationships in India. More specifically, in this exploratory study, we examine the extent to which factors such as general satisfaction with police services, police professionalism, feeling of safety, and perception of police integrity all explain the public confidence in police–citizen relationships. Those who are generally satisfied with police like to work with police and view police–community relationships positively. Further, we find that those who feel police are fair in dealing with citizens, irrespective of social status, and those who feel more safe in their communities are those who are most willing to work with police.

Keywords Citizen–police relationship · Satisfaction · Professionalism · Corruption · Performance · Trust in police · Community policing India

Introduction

The importance of the citizens' perceptions and evaluations of the police is well established, particularly given the emerging popularity of community policing around the globe. Citizen involvement and the partnership between the police and the public is vital for: safeguarding citizens; helping to co-produce safe and orderly communities; and in enhancing the quality of community life (Thurman and McGarrell 2005, p. 113). With the recent popularity of community policing, it has also been increasingly acknowledged that cooperation between the public and the police is critical for the success of these programs (Rosenbaum 1988; Cao and Zhao 2005). An important element of all community policing programs is to bring about closer working relationships between law enforcement officers and citizens in an effort to be more responsive to the community's needs. Citizens who are less satisfied with the police are less likely to be cooperative with police officers and less

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willing to share information critical to making police work more efficient (Brown and Benedict 2002; Greene and Decker 1989).

The issue of police–citizen relationships has assumed greater significance with the popularity of community policing programs in the U.S. and other developed democracies. Police departments that have community policing programs place greater emphasis on, and encouragement of, citizen participation in order to enhance public safety (Rosenbaum 1994; Skogan 2004). To this extent, a large number of studies have examined police officers' attitudes toward the community policing philosophy and the effectiveness of community policing programs (Lewis et al. 1999; Lurigio and Skogan 1994; Trojanowicz and Bucqueroux 1990; Winfree and Newbold 1999) as well as citizens' attitudes toward police and their satisfaction with police services (Reisig and Parks 2000; Sims et al. 2002). Thus, understanding the nature of the public's attitudes regarding cooperation and working relationships with the police is key to strengthening police–community relationships and, by extension, community policing programs.

Relative to the police research conducted in western countries, there is very limited systematic scholarly research on police in India. While it is documented that police personnel in India are poorly educated and are notorious for extortion, misbehavior, and poor services to citizens (Scott et al. 2009, p. 214), there is barely any research conducted on Indian citizens' perceptions of police and police services, let alone attitudes toward police–community relationships. The objective of this exploratory study is to contribute to the knowledge of police–citizen relationships in an emerging market by assessing factors that shape Indian citizens' support for citizen–police cooperation and its implications for gaining public support for community policing programs in India. Over the last 15 years, over 12 of the 28 Indian states have adopted community policing programs with a common goal of bringing the police and community members together to address local problems and to establish programs as diverse as city vigilante committees, institution of complaint boxes, forming community consultative groups, working with school children, drug awareness programs, blood banks and health awareness camps, among others. While some programs are statewide (as is Kerala's *Janamaithri Suraksha Padhathi*) others are city-specific programs such as *Friends of Police* (POP) in the Ramnad District in the State of Tamil Nadu (Philip 1996).

More specifically, in this study, we assess the importance of demographics, as well as contextual factors such as perceptions of citizens' trust in police, satisfaction with police, their views on police corruption, their feeling of safety in predicting their views of citizen–police cooperation. Additionally, in this study, we introduce an innovative method to gather data from a sample of Indian citizens and assess whether this new data collection strategy produces results consistent with prior research conducted in a western context, which further enhances the reliability and validity of our methodology and the survey instrument.

Literature Review

Why should citizens be supportive of police–community relationships? Police in developed economies have long recognized that one of the key ingredients for effective policing is the active involvement of its constituents in dealing with community crime problems. This is all the more complicated in new, independent democracies of former colonies that have a long history of authoritarian and repressive police forces whose primary role was to serve as agents of the state and whose actions are not representative of the citizens' well-being. Effective policing involves active engagement and collaboration of citizens in the co-

production of order maintenance (Moore et al. 1988). Such participation occurs in two ways: citizens assist police by reporting suspicious behavior and there is active participation by community residents in police-sponsored programs such as community policing (Rosenbaum 1988). In general, failure to consider citizens' attitudes about policing will lead to the failure of any programs aimed to augment (Albrecht and Green 1977).

People who are dissatisfied with the police are less likely to provide them with crime-related information and are more reluctant to cooperate with the police, which diminishes police effectiveness in controlling crime (Brown and Benedict 2002; Decker 1985). Further, public reciprocity and willingness to cooperate with the police, for the most part, depends on their trust, satisfaction, and confidence in police as an organization and institution (Sunshine and Tyler 2003; Tyler 1990). To this extent, while considerable research has been done by western democracies that examine citizens' attitudes toward the police in general (Correia et al. 1996; Decker 1981; Frank et al. 1996; Huebner et al. 2004) and, to a limited extent, on community policing (Reisig and Giacomazzi 1998), little research is available on the factors that determine citizens' attitudes about their willingness to cooperate with the police and how to develop successful police–community relationships.

The extent to which citizens are willing to come forward to establish relationships with police or simply to respond to police initiatives inviting them to participate in building police–community relationships depends upon many factors. These include poor police–community relationships (Sadd and Grinc 1994), citizen apathy, ambiguity about a citizen's precise role, intra-group conflicts, and community politics (Grinc 1994). Walker (1992) noted that conditions in large urban centers where there are higher rates of mobility and heterogeneous populations with weak ties to the community makes it hard to establish successful police–community relationships. Others cite high crime rates, diversity of social class (Haerberle 1987), and fear of crime (Kelling and Wilson 1982) as factors that influence citizens to retreat from participating in police–community partnerships. Lavrakas and Herz (1982) argued that community context variables play an important role in influencing citizen participation in police–community relationships. For instance, if people perceive that there are neighborhood problems with crime and disorder, they are more likely to cooperate with police. Though there is support for the notion that a favorable public attitude towards police is directly related to citizen support for police–community relationships (Reisig and Correia 1997), others discount it as not being a good predictor of citizen support for participation in police–community relationships (Frank et al. 1996).

Very few studies have examined determinants of citizens' perceptions of police–community relationships. Hahn (1971) noted that community residents who distrust police are least likely to assist or cooperate with them. This suggests that a citizen's willingness to assist police or share information is reflective of perceived cooperation and communications between citizens and police (Glaser et al. 2001). Drawing off the lessons from community policing in Chicago and Seattle, Lyons reiterated that police–citizen partnerships flourish when these relationships are “reciprocal and representative” (Lyons 2002, p. 536). Greene and Decker (1989) in a case study in Philadelphia examined both officers' and citizens' views of police–citizen relationships as part of a project called Community Oriented Police Education (COPE) concluded that citizens support of police–citizen relationships declines after participating in the program. The survey contains several dimensions of police–citizen interaction that include citizen support for police action, the extent to which crime responsibility was seen as a police concern, the quality of police and community interactions, and the extent to which community crime prevention efforts are visible at the neighborhood level, among others (Greene and Decker 1989, p. 113). Reisig and Giacomazzi (1998), in a study in a small northwestern city in the U.S., found that

citizens who held a more negative view of police performance are more likely to be supportive of citizen–police partnerships. In this research, the authors measure police–citizen relations by using three items that include dependable ties between police and public, officers’ interactions with citizens, and the ease of developing friendships between offices and citizens (Reisig and Giacomazzi 1998, p. 552).

While much of the above-referenced literature is based on the research done in the United States (a developed country), it is also important to discuss similar research based on developing nations or transitioning democratic nations. Drawing data from the European and World Values Surveys Integrated Data File, Cao and Burton (2006) measured Turkish public confidence in their police by a single item: “How much confidence do you have in the police?” More than two-thirds of Turkish citizens responded that they had confidence in the Turkish police, a figure which is comparable to reported levels of public confidence in the police from democratic societies, particularly the U.S (Skogan 1978; Cao and Burton 2006).

Acknowledging the importance of public opinion toward the police, using data from the World Values Surveys in 1995–1997, Cao and Dai (2006) studied the public attitude toward the police in Taiwan—a nation considered to be in democratic transition. Based on that single item, as studied in the Turkish study, the authors found that about 59 percent of the Taiwanese citizens expressed confidence in their police. Also, it was noted that those well-educated are less confident in the police than those less educated, and those married are more confident in the police than those unmarried. Further age, gender, and subjective social class did not forecast confidence in the Taiwanese police. In another study, it was noted that confidence in the police was part of a broader attitudinal complex of larger legal and political systems (Cao and Zhao 2005). In examples drawn from Latin America, the authors noted the effects of income to be related negatively to the confidence in the police.

An empirical assessment of the public perceptions of the police in Mexico reemphasized how little confidence people have in municipal, state, or federal police agencies (Brown et al. 2006). Almost 70 percent of the respondents report that the state police agencies do an inadequate job when it comes to controlling crime, investigating burglaries, fraud, and murder, and in treating people fairly. While most of this research focuses on citizen confidence in police, we find very little analysis on factors that determine citizen support for police–community relationships. Thus, we fill this void by examining the relationship between various demographic and contextual variables on police–citizen relationships in India.

Present Study: Context

India, with a population of over 1.2 billion, is the 11th largest economy in the world and ranks high on the metrics of economic and social development. With over 1,269,420 square miles (3,287,800 sq km) of territory, the Indian Police Service (IPS) handles the law and order responsibilities in all the 28 states and seven union territories. Though each state and union territory is responsible for administering its police, they are fairly similar in their organization and structure. Unlike the decentralized police organizations in the U.S., in India, most states are responsible for their police and are governed by the Police Act of 1861 which makes provisions for all major criminal laws, the Code of Criminal Procedure and other related acts that apply uniformly to the majority of the jurisdictions with a few exceptions. For instance, Maharashtra and Gujarat are governed by the Bombay Police Act of 1951; Kerala, by the Kerala Police Act of 1960; Karnataka by the Karnataka Police Act of 1963; and, finally Delhi is governed by the Delhi Police Act of 1978 (Joshi 2002).

The IPS, an All India Service at the national level, through a civil service examination, recruits young officers who are trained and assigned to various states in leadership responsibilities, a format established by the British where it has its higher ranked officers supervise the lower ranked policemen (Sharma 1996). Senior officers, referred to as ‘gazetted ranks’, are recruited at both national and state levels but belong to state cadres (i.e., assigned to specific states irrespective of the state they come from) throughout their careers while junior officers are recruited at the state level.

According to Bureau of Police Research and Development (2008), in 1995 there was one constable for every 695 people while in 2007 there was one for every 653 persons. A state police force has two main components—the civil police and the armed police. While the primary function of the civil police is to control crime, the armed police mainly deal with law and order situations. In 2005, there was a little over one million civil and about 360,000 armed personnel spread over nearly 12,000 police stations in 605 police districts (CHRI 2002).

As a former British colony, post-independent India retained much of the vestiges of colonial policing, with a primary operational philosophy of serving government interests at the cost of negligence of human rights, at times. This occurred despite much effort to reform the IPS. While there are general accounts of the history of police organization (Verma 1997), very little research systematically has examined citizens’ perspectives of law enforcement in India while the Indian media extensively covers crime and justice issues. Media and human rights organizations in India have for a long time pointed out the ineptness of Indian civil police citing poor training, apathy, misconduct, brutality, and corruption as factors. Police are regularly faulted for torturing suspects to extract confessions and for abusing ordinary prisoners, particularly members of the lower status (Verma 1999). In 2006, the Indian Supreme Court, in a historical judgment, ordered reform of the existing 145-year-old Indian Police Act with emphasis on establishing better rule of law, greater accountability to the public, and helping minimize political interference.

This landmark decision has given much impetus to nongovernmental organizations, as well as state police organizations, in establishing a greater connection with the public. For instance, from the citizens’ perspective, examples such as the Police Reforms—People’s Perspective—Public is Police (PRPP—PP) Campaign was started at Sirsa, Harayana in January, 2010, with its primary objective to bridge the gap between grassroots realities and policymakers in an effort to overhaul the police in India, with active citizen participation in policy analysis based on empirical study (Team Nishan 2010). Many programs—mostly community policing—were initiated by police departments from various states to establish closer contact with citizens to build positive relationships across the country. In an overview of various programs around the country, Mukherjee (n.d.) identified several states that have existing programs or who have implemented programs that are statewide or in specific cities. While some programs are simply referred to as ‘community policing’, others have adopted names that reflect the underlying philosophy of COP in local languages.

While this is an impressive reflection of the various Indian police organizations’ enthusiasm to build bridges with their constituents countrywide, it is not clear if the general population is even familiar with the notion as to what community policing refers. Second, despite growing efforts to improve police services, increase police accountability, and encourage active citizen participation, there is very little systematic research as to the extent to which citizens would like to partner with police in establishing successful police–community relationships. Third, the success of these community policing programs are directly related to the extent to which citizens feel positive about police. With this in mind, in this exploratory paper we examine citizens’ perceptions of police–community cooperation in India. More specifically, we analyze citizens’ perceptions and attitudes

toward police cooperation in India and the extent to which various demographic and experiential variables predict citizens' attitudes about police–community relationships.

Methods

Survey Construction and Empirical Specification

The survey was written in English to elicit citizens' responses on a wide range of issues, including *satisfaction with police services, police corruption, feeling of safety, citizen–police cooperation, their view of the extent to which police trust citizens, and police fairness*. Most of the items were constructed and operationalized based on previous research (e.g., Davis et al. 2004; Decker 1981; Hwang et al. 2005; Kusow et al. 1997; Reisig and Correia 1997; Reisig and Giacomazzi 1998) and tailored to the Indian context. Questions were designed to measure their opinions on a 5-point Likert Scale where 1 represents strongly agree and 5 strongly disagree. All questions with Likert responses were reverse coded for the analyses to a scale ranging from 1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree to guarantee that low values indicated a lower perception of police cooperation and vice versa.

Dependent Variable

Citizens' perception of police cooperation is measured with a combination of two questions: “police persons and public often work together in solving crime problems”; and “police persons and public work together to protect the public from criminals”. Factor analysis (principal component) with varimax rotation method was used to identify various items loading up in the scale. The dependent variable, *citizen perception of police cooperation*, was thus operationalized as both an additive scale and a weighted factor regression score through factor analysis and reliability testing. The Cronbach's Alpha for the cooperation scale was noted as 0.74, suggesting encouraging internal reliability.

Independent Variables

We used two sets of independent variables: individual demographic characteristics and contextual/experiential characteristics. First, age, gender, education, income estimate, and having relatives or friends in police constituted independent variables in the model. Rounded to the nearest year at the last birthday, respondents were asked their age. Gender was coded as a dichotomized variable (0=female; 1=male). Educational background was categorized in two categories, 0=College and less, and 1=University degree. Annual income status (in INR) was coded in three categories as 1=Less than 250,000 (approximately US\$5,600 at 1 US\$ ~44.3 INR) or less, 2=250,001–400,000 (approximately US\$ 9,000) and 3=400,001 and greater. Relatives or friends in police was a dichotomous variable with 0=No and 1=Yes.

The second set of variables, contextual characteristics, consists of six scales (see Table 2). It is not uncommon in India for residents to ask their neighbors to watch their property in their absence. Keeping this cultural context in view, respondents were asked if their *neighbors engage in neighborhood watch* (0/1=No/Yes). The next independent scale *Overall satisfaction with police services* was constructed using eight independent items. Each of the eight items had factor loadings ranging between 0.54 and 0.74 with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.88.

Citizens' View of Police Corruption was constructed using eight individual variables (refer to Table 2). Factor loading of the items varied between a minimum of 0.59 to a maximum of 0.78. Overall, the corruption scale loaded with a high Cronbach's alpha of 0.89 suggesting significant internal reliability. Citizens were asked if they feel safe in their neighborhood after dark, and if they feel safe walking alone at night in their neighborhood. These two items, with factor loadings of 0.81 and 0.83, respectively, formed the scale, '*citizens' feeling of safety*'. The Cronbach's alpha for this scale was 0.79 suggesting high internal reliability. As a measure of police respect toward citizens, the respondents were asked if police are concerned about respecting a citizen's individual rights. Nearly, 52 percent of the sample disagreed, while 21 percent remained neutral (mean=2.71). Finally, the respondents were asked their views on police fairness: if the police officers in their neighborhood investigate in a fair manner regardless of the difference in social status of victims. Only 15 percent of the respondents answered positively (mean=2.43).

Data Collection

For this study, the data ($n=204$) was collected in two segments in the summer of 2008—one from a middle class neighborhood in the capital city, New Delhi, India, referred to as “community sample” or “static sample”, and another from rail passengers traveling from the northern part (New Delhi) to the southern part (Bengaluru) of the country (a trip which takes 41 hours each way) and back. This segment of the data is referred to as the “dynamic sample”. Data from the static sample came from a convenient sample of a middle class neighborhood in New Delhi. Residents of a housing colony often assemble in a nearby central courtyard or park to go for a walk or practice yoga. With the permission of the community residents, surveys were distributed to the group of assembled residents in this park before they began their morning yoga session or any other form of morning exercises and the completed surveys were collected from them on their way out of the park. The community sample ($n=64$) consists of 31 percent females and nearly 69 percent males.

A large majority of our sample, which we refer to as '*dynamic sample*' (69%), came from passengers who boarded a passenger train in New Delhi en route to Bengaluru. About 28 percent females and 72 percent males took part in the study. There are 29 halts between New Delhi and Bengaluru City Junction.¹ At almost every junction there is a possible flow of passengers, incoming as well as outgoing. A long-distance train journey in India is an experience given the distances and time it takes to travel. Passengers can be seen chit-chatting with fellow passengers, playing cards, reading magazines and books, listening to music or engaged in animated conversations about current events or politics. In the presence of all these possible scenarios, it is promising for a researcher to approach them and ask for their assistance in filling out a survey. The train sample ($n=140$) consisted of 25 percent females and 75 percent males.

The skewed distribution of males and females in our sample warrants an explanation. Typically, when the researchers approached the subjects, men often took the initiative to participate in the study. This is not uncommon in the Indian cultural context where men are generally assumed to be the head of the household and often take the lead to interact when a stranger approaches their families. In terms of the train journey, it is likely that, when women passengers traveling with families were approached to participate in the study, men were more likely to participate in the survey thus skewing our sample.

¹ <http://indiarailinfo.com/train/map/920/664/136> (Accessed on April 25, 2010)

Cognizant of the fact that the passengers are going from one destination to another, unknown to the researchers, and that they are the least likely to be traced back, they can be viewed as highly likely to share their true opinions and perceptions that are more reflective of their actual beliefs, thus adding to the reliability of this data collection methodology and, further, the results. Nevertheless, the benefit and experience of collecting such a heterogeneous data spatially within a short span can be unparalleled and ultimately be valuable to the data analysis. The goal of this approach is also to get a fairly diverse survey population in terms of language, religion, ethnicity, education, culture, caste, and city of origin.

Analysis and Findings

Univariate Analysis

The general characteristics of the sample is described in Table 1. Nearly 38 percent of the overall sample was less than or equal to 25 years, 26 percent were between 26 and 40 years of age, and nearly 36 percent of the sample was 41 years or older (mean age=35). The sample was 71 percent males and 60 percent were university graduates. The respondents were approximately equally split in the three categories of income brackets. About 34 percent reported their family annual income to be INR 250,000 or less.² Thirty-five percent noted their family annual income to be between INR 250,001 and 400,000. Close to 31 percent reported theirs to be above 400,001. Thirty-six percent of the respondents reported to have a relative or friend in police.

Nearly 58 percent of the respondents reported that neighbors in the community engaged in neighborhood watch. Overall satisfaction with police services is an additive scale, comprised of eight individual items, the scale records a minimum of 8 implying the least satisfaction with police services, or 40, indicating high satisfaction with police services. The mean for this scale is 21.1 suggesting an almost neutral viewpoint towards the satisfaction with police services. Transparency International 2009 reported India's corruption perceptions index to be 3.4 and placed it at 85th out of 180 countries (Zinnbauer et al. 2009). The Indian police are known for corruption. Verma (1999) noted that Indian police corruption is well recognized, pervasive, and exists within every rank, from the constable to the chief of police and in every police department in the country. On a scale of 10 to 50, in the citizen perception of police corruption scale, the respondents reported a mean of 32.3 indicating a very high agreement with the items measuring police corruption.

Respondents did not possess a very positive feeling regarding safety in their neighborhood. The mean is 5.5 with a standard deviation of 2.2, on a scale of 2 to 10. Finally, respondents were asked if the police investigate in fair manner regardless of the social status of victims. On a scale of 1 to 5, the reported mean for this item is 2.4 with a

² We acknowledge that it is difficult to compare Indian income levels with the U.S. or other developed economies. Though the average Indian annual income is about \$500, given the size of the country with nearly 1.2 billion population and a 30% urban population, it has been estimated that 31.3% of Indian households had a disposable income of US\$2,500–5,000 (Euromonitor International 2008). <http://motherchildnutrition.org/india/pdf/mcn-annual-gross-income.pdf> Accessed May 10, 2011. The range of this income generally represents urban India's household income. The average household income in cities such as Delhi and Mumbai are in 2007 were over INR 400,000 (about US\$9,200) (*The Economic Times* 8/28/2010). http://articles.economicstimes.indiatimes.com/2008-08-08/news/28447653_1_consumption-expenditure-cities-account-household Accessed May 10, 2011.

Table 1 Distributions and Descriptive Statistics of Respondents in India Study ($n=204$)

Variable	Description	<i>n</i>	%	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Demographic characteristics							
Age	1= \leq 25 years	77	37.7	35.7	14.5	18	78
	2=26–40 years	53	26				
	3= \geq 41 years	74	36.3				
Gender ^a	0=Female	53	26	0.73	0.44	0	1
	1=Male	145	71.1				
Education	0=College and less	80	39.2	0.61	0.49	0	1
	1=University degree	124	60.8				
Estimate of gross family income salary (INR)	1= \leq 250,000	69	33.8	1.98	0.81	1	3
	2=250,001 – 400,000	71	34.8				
	3= \geq 400,001	64	31.4				
Relatives or friends in police	0=No	74	36.3	0.64	0.48	0	1
	1=Yes	130	63.7				
Neighbors in community engage in neighborhood watch	0=No	126	57.8	1.42	0.49	0	1
	1=Yes	78	38.2				
Contextual characteristics ^b							
Overall satisfaction with police services				21.10	6.11	8	40
Perception of police corruption				32.31	5.65	8	40
Feeling of safety in neighborhood				5.52	2.16	2	10
Police are concerned about respecting a citizen's individual's rights				2.71	1.19	1	5
Police investigate in fair manner regardless of social status				2.43	1.01	1	5

^a May not add to 100% due to six missing cases

^b 1= strongly disagree; 5= strongly agree

standard deviation of 1.0, also indicating that a majority of the respondents do not find that police investigations are independent of the social status of a victim.

The scale depicting the public–police working relationship has a high Cronbach alpha value of 0.74. A detailed breakdown in Table 2 further highlights each item that captured citizen–police cooperation. For instance, nearly 37 percent of the respondents asserted positively that police persons and the public often work together in solving crime problems. The mean for this item is reported as 3.0 with a standard deviation of 1.2. Similarly, another item contributing to the cooperation scale has a positive response rate of 44 percent with a mean of 2.7. That is, nearly 56 percent of the respondents do not perceive that police and the public work together when it comes to protecting the public from criminals. Alternatively, this could also mean that ordinary citizens do not find themselves capable of dealing with criminals, which in turn implies that police view them as incapable and thus do not encourage them to work with them in protecting the public from criminals.

Table 2 displays a detailed account of the contextual independent variables used to develop the ordinary least square model discussed later in the paper. Each item was selected based on the principal component analysis (using rotated component matrix with varimax

Table 2 Public Perceptions of Police in India ($n=204$)

Variable	SA/A <i>n</i> / <i>%</i>	Neutral <i>n</i> / <i>%</i>	SD/D <i>n</i> / <i>%</i>	Mean ^a /SD	Factor loadings
Dependent variables					
Citizen–police cooperation					
Police persons and public often work together in solving crime problems	76/37.3	49/24.0	79/38.7	3.00/1.17	0.55
Police persons and public work together to protect the public from criminals	90/44.1	46/22.5	68/33.3	3.13/1.14	0.71
Cronbach's alpha					0.74
Independent variables					
Overall satisfaction with police services					
Police persons are generally helpful	52/25.5	75/36.9	77/37.7	2.77/1.04	0.58
Police officers perform politely in handling traffic accidents or violations	67/32.8	37/18.1	100/49.0	2.74/1.15	0.58
Police persons handle calls for assistance with politeness	50/24.5	70/34.3	84/41.2	2.75/0.99	0.66
Police in my neighborhood are kind and helpful even when consulted on a case that is not under their jurisdiction	37/18.1	51/25.0	116/56.9	2.52/0.99	0.69
Police are very attentive when a victim reports a crime	53/26.0	38/18.6	113/55.4	2.58/1.10	0.54
Police persons, in general, are sensitive to the public	43/21.1	53/26.0	108/52.9	2.58/1.05	0.66
I am satisfied with the police service in my neighborhood	36/17.6	80/39.2	88/43.1	2.62/1.02	0.69
Generally, I am satisfied with the way police persons conduct themselves	41/20.1	55/27.0	108/52.9	2.53/1.04	0.74
Cronbach's alpha					0.88
Citizen perception of police corruption					
Police officers take bribes in handling traffic accidents or traffic violations	176/86.3	15/7.4	13/6.4	4.26/0.94	0.78
Police take bribes in connection with their handling of criminal cases (theft, robbery, investigation, etc.)	168/82.4	24/11.8	12/5.9	4.18/0.89	0.78
Police personnel allow illegal operation of shops and other businesses to operate in areas they are not allowed to operate	165/80.9	21/10.3	18/8.8	4.02/0.91	0.73
It is very easy to bribe a police person these days	165/80.9	27/13.2	12/5.9	4.11/0.90	0.74
People often get away by bribing a police person instead of being given a citation/ticket	152/74.5	35/17.2	17/8.3	3.94/0.93	0.59
When a policeman approaches me, I am very concerned that he will end up asking for a bribe in order to let me go	144/70.6	32/15.7	28/13.7	3.82/1.05	0.66
Police are more likely to follow up with the victim's complaints/reports only if they are bribed	136/66.7	41/20.1	27/13.2	3.78/1.00	0.63
Police are more likely to follow up with the victim's complaints/reports when they recognize that you have social/political influence	162/79.4	31/15.2	11/5.4	4.19/0.90	0.66
Cronbach's alpha					0.89

Table 2 (continued)

Variable	SA/A n/%	Neutral n/%	SD/D n/%	Mean ^a /SD	Factor loadings
Feelings of safety					
I feel very safe in my neighborhood after dark	68/33.3	32/15.7	104/51.0	2.75/1.21	0.81
I feel safe walking alone at night in my neighborhood	68/33.3	32/15.7	104/51.0	2.76/1.16	0.83
Cronbach's Alpha					0.79
Police are concerned about respecting a citizen's individual's rights	57/27.9	42/20.6	105/51.5	2.71/1.19	0.64
Police officers in my neighborhood investigate in a fair manner regardless of the difference of social status of victims	30/14.7	61/29.9	113/55.4	2.43/1.01	0.58

SD/D Strongly disagree/disagree (1), SA/A strongly agree/agree (5)

^aMean based on scale 1 to 5

rotations, $n=50$) and factors with corresponding high factor loadings were combined to construct the scales. Further, to ensure the internal reliability of each scale, the Cronbach alpha was computed. Police in India do not enjoy a positive view of the citizens, and thus citizens report a very conservative view pertaining to satisfaction with police services. For instance, only 26 percent find police to be generally helpful. Notorious regarding their handling of traffic violations (Verma 1999), only 32 percent of the respondents perceive that police officers perform politely in handling traffic accidents or violations. Almost two-thirds of the respondents do not view police as handling calls for assistance with politeness (mean=2.8). This finding can be quite revealing and is likely to have an impact on citizen–police cooperation. Since citizens do not view that police handle calls for assistance politely, they are rather likely to feel repelled by the police presence. Police, in general, are expected to be sensitive to the public; however, only 21 percent (mean=2.6) of the respondents agreed with this characteristic. When respondents were asked if they were satisfied with the police services in their neighborhood, only 18 percent of the citizens agreed (mean=2.62; SD=1.02). Finally, only 20 percent agree that generally they are satisfied with the way police conduct themselves (mean=2.53; SD=1.04). Overall, this factor yielded a reliability coefficient (Cronbach alpha) of 0.88 signifying high internal reliability.

The police in India have an unsavory reputation for extortion and corruption as being widespread (Verma 1999, p. 267). In this study, respondents were asked a set of items indicating police corruption in India. Eighty-six percent (mean=4.26) of the sample view that police officers take bribes in handling traffic accidents or traffic violations. Even when it comes to the handling of criminal cases such as theft, robbery, investigation, etc., police are reported to be taking bribes from concerned citizens. Nearly 81 percent of the people agree that police personnel allow illegal operation of shops and other businesses in areas where they are not supposed to be allowed to operate, and that it is very easy to bribe a police officer these days. Almost 75 percent of the respondents believe that people get away by bribing the police instead of being given a citation. Such is the pervasiveness of police corruption in India, that 71 percent of the sample reports that they are very concerned that a police officer approaching him/her will end up asking for a bribe.

Finally, similar to any modern society, India has a population that can be broadly classified as a high social class versus a low social class. In this context, the social class of an individual is likely to largely influence the behavior or attitude of a policeman in India. For instance, the likelihood of a victim's complaint/report being followed up by a police officer can be influenced by whether or not they are bribed by the victim or whether or not the officer recognizes that the victim may have social/political influence. For instance, a large percentage of the respondents agree that police are more likely to follow up the victim's complaints only if they are bribed (67 percent) or if they have social or political influence (79 percent). On a scale of 1 to 5, the means for the two items are reported as 3.8 and 4.2, respectively. These numbers were further validated by the first female Inspector General of Police, Dr. Kiran Bedi, a senior police bureaucrat who, in a nationally televised interview, admitted there are plenty of times when politicians call the police and ask them to go easy on a case where their relatives/friends are involved (Kiran Bedi's candid conversation with Vir Sanghvi 2008).

Feelings of safety do not always echo reality, and the fear of crime can be influenced by neighbors, friends, and media portrayal of crimes in the neighborhood. Certain policing variables also contribute to feeling safe when walking at night (Ganjavi et al. 2000, p. 33). For example, it is likely that individuals feel safer when they see the police more frequently or feel that the police handle problems well when there are fewer crimes reported in their neighborhood. In the current study, only 33.3 percent of the sample indicated that they feel safe after dark or while walking alone at night in the neighborhood. Given that two-thirds of the respondents do not feel safe after dark in their neighborhood, this calls for more proactive policing by law enforcement agencies in the neighborhoods. Additionally, it has also been noted elsewhere that the feeling of safety has a direct relationship with citizen satisfaction with police services/attitudes toward crime (Ganjavi et al. 2000, p. 33). Thus, encouraging a better policing system that focuses on reducing fear for safety in the neighborhood overall can generate a couple of positive results – first, it can inherently make the communities safer, and secondly it also can invoke positive citizen satisfaction with police and police services. In order to assess police fairness, citizens were asked their opinion on whether police are concerned about respecting a citizen's individual rights. Only one-third of the sample responded in agreement while 51 percent did not believe that police are concerned about respecting a citizen's individual rights. Assuming a likely relationship between social influence and police attitude, citizens were also asked if the police officers in their neighborhood investigate in a fair manner regardless of the difference in social status of the victims, to which only 15 percent of the sample respondents answered in agreement.

Multivariate Analysis

Following a detailed univariate analysis, ordinary least squares (OLS) multiple regression analysis was performed to determine the relative influence of citizens' demographic and contextual characteristics on the citizen–police relationship. The multivariate analysis included the demographic characteristics of age, gender, education, place of residence, property status, and estimate of family income. The contextual perception variables (neighborhood watch, satisfaction with police, view of police corruption, feeling of safety, and police fairness and police respect for citizens) were subsequently included among the independent variables to assess the contribution of these attitudinal variables to the model. The inclusion of these attitudinal variables also served to check if these perceptions intervened within the effects of perception of citizen–police cooperation.

In Table 3, using an OLS multiple regression analysis, we study two models. In the first model, we regress the demographic variables against the dependent variable, *citizen perception of citizen–police cooperation*. In the second model; we include the contextual variables to assess the extent to which they explain citizen’s perception of citizen–police cooperation. Consider the partial model ($n=204$), based on the unstandardized regression coefficient; only one of the explanatory variables appears to be significant. Citizens having relatives or friends in police is a significant predictor ($\beta=1.31$, $p\leq 0.01$) of the citizen perception toward citizen–police cooperation. This means that citizens who have friends or relatives in police are more likely to have a positive perception of public–police cooperation. The R^2 value of the partial model is reported as 10 percent (adjusted $R^2=0.08$) implying that little variation in citizen perception of citizen–police cooperation is explained by this model.

Table 3 also displays the full model which introduces attitudinal and experiential variables such as neighborhood watch, overall satisfaction with police services, views of police corruption, feelings of safety, police respect for the citizens, and police investigation with respect to the social status of victim into the multivariate analysis. Citizens who report that their neighbors in the community engage in neighborhood watch are more likely to support citizen–police cooperation ($\beta=0.60$ and $p\leq 0.000$) and were more likely to support a citizen–police partnership or cooperation. Next, citizens who report overall satisfaction with police are more likely to support citizen–police cooperation. This finding is statistically significant with the unstandardized coefficient, $\beta=0.06$ and $p\leq 0.05$. Given the construct, overall satisfaction with police services, it is likely, for instance, that those citizens who report that police are generally helpful will be also be more likely to support citizen–police cooperation.

Table 3 Ordinary Least Square (Citizen–Police Cooperation regressed on Demographic and contextual variables) ($n=204$)

Variables	Partial model		Full model	
	β	t	β	t
Socio-demographic characteristics				
Age	–0.01	–0.76	–0.01	–1.47
Gender	–0.27	–0.83	–0.17	–0.59
Educational background	–0.20	–0.66	–0.04	–0.15
Income	0.05	0.30	0.04	0.23
Relatives or friends in police	1.31	4.24**	0.86	3.03**
Contextual characteristics				
Neighbors in community engage in neighborhood watch			0.60	2.22**
Overall satisfaction with the police services			0.06	1.96*
View of police corruption			0.04	1.45
Feelings of safety			0.11	1.68
Police investigate in a fair manner regardless of social status			0.28	1.67
Police are concerned about respecting a citizen’s individual’s rights			0.50	4.30**
Constant	6.19	10.22	0.94	1.33
R^2	0.10		0.32	
Adjusted R^2	0.08		0.28	

* $p<0.05$, ** $p<0.01$

Finally, citizens who believe that police are concerned about respecting a citizen's individual rights are significantly more likely ($\beta=0.50$ and $p\leq 0.01$) to perceive public–police cooperation. The standardized regression coefficients (not reported in this table) for the attitudinal variables were much higher than those for demographic variables, emphasizing that the attitudinal variables were a stronger predictor of citizen satisfaction with the police than the demographic variables, a finding consistent with prior research. When attitudinal perceptions were included in the model, the R^2 value increased from 0.10 to 0.32. The adjusted R^2 value of 0.28 indicates that the regression model is free from alternative interpretations using other samples from the data set. This increase of the R^2 value in the model (partial vs. full) further establishes the importance of contextual variables in explaining citizen perception toward citizen–police cooperation.

Discussion and Conclusion

Attitudinal surveys can assist public and private agencies to better understand their customers and clients (Ganjavi et al. 2000), which may further lead to service improvements and better strategic decisions that address the concerns raised in these surveys. This study was one such attempt to assess citizen perception of citizen–police cooperation in India and the factors that influence these perceptions. For instance, we find that the contextual experiences of citizens with police play a vital role in their perception toward citizen–police cooperation.

Many of the community and individual level characteristics that explain citizen support for police in general are also those that suggest support for police–community relationships. Those who are generally satisfied with police like to work with police and are more positive of police–community relationships. Further, those who feel police respect citizen's individual rights support the two groups working together.

Given the media reports and citizen encounters, corruption and police in India appear to be synonymous. When asked about the items measuring police corruption, in all cases, more than 80 percent seemed to indicate their existing view was police are corrupt. For instance, respondents were asked if the police in India are more likely to follow up a victim's complaints/reports only if they are bribed and almost 80 percent of them responded with an assertion. On the other hand, this statement can also imply that the police in India may not follow up a victim's complaints against an offender when they are aware of the offender's political/social influence. As mentioned earlier, this implication was validated by Dr. Kiran Bedi who noted that there are plenty of times when politicians call the police and ask them to go easy on a case where their relative/friend is involved.

An important argument made in the same interview is worth sharing in its context to understanding and perhaps explaining police corruption, "... there is nothing wrong with the police... what's wrong with the police is leadership and the management of the force. The management of the force comes from three grounds – political leadership, the home secretary, and the Inspector general of police. If they are all three on one right wavelength, then there is no problem with the policing. It is because of these three differing wavelengths, police is in mess" (Kiran Bedi's candid conversation with Vir Sanghvi 2008).

Overall, our findings based on the univariate analysis (Table 2) suggest that Indian citizens, similar to Mexican citizens (Brown et al. 2006) perceive police less positively when compared to the findings from Taiwan (Cao and Dai 2006) and Turkey (Cao and Burton 2006). Our findings are also consistent with prior research that suggests there is a

positive relationship between citizens who are satisfied with the police and those who support police–community relationships. Perhaps, the strength of this research is the adoption of a unique survey methodology for data collection to determine factors that explain a citizen–police partnership. Given the social, cultural, and economic context of India, long-distance train journeys offer an opportunity for drawing a unique sample. Having said that, we draw attention to some limitations in which our findings should be interpreted cautiously. First and perhaps most significant is the sample size. Drawing from a large sample, while attainable, requires the resources for conducting such a large-scale research. Additionally, our survey did not capture citizens’ perceptions across their caste or religion, which is predominant in Indian society, as opposed to the race variable in western context (Thomas and Hyman 1977). Thus, future research measuring citizen perception of the citizen–police cooperation in India can perhaps incorporate another demographic characteristic, namely, caste and religion.

Second, given the nature of our methodology, we remind readers that these results should be viewed cautiously as they predominantly represent the views of well-educated males, and higher income respondents. We acknowledge this as a limitation to the study and encourage future research to understand citizens’ perceptions of police drawn from a wider cross-section of society.

Another factor missing from our study was the ‘media influence’, as most people derive their knowledge about criminal justice from media consumption (Surette 2006). For instance, following Wu and Sun (2010), future research measuring citizen perception of police can include this variable constructed by asking the respondents the frequency of how many times they hear or read (on the radio, television, internet, or in a newspaper) about incidents of police conduct (such as excessive use of force by police, verbal abuse, extortion, corruption and so on) or positive stories regarding the police. Following Gerbner’s “cultivation hypothesis”, respondents viewing more “reality” police programs exhibited a higher confidence in law enforcement agencies. This is because, under this hypothesis, it is assumed that the media is showing a pro-police message (Gerbner and Gross 1976). Therefore, frequent viewers of the news may also report better attitudes toward police, lending weight to Gerbner’s position that all media portrayals produced a positive perception of police (Eschholz et al. 2002).

However, whereas the media frequently reports stories about policing in India where the majority of them are not so positive, it would be worth the effort to measure the impact of media on citizen perception, since positive perception of police is believed to be linked to citizens and police working together and keeping the community safer. Furthermore, there is a growing need for a creative partnership between the police and the community in order to cultivate police–public relationships to help solve community crime-related problems.

The findings from this study have strong implications for community policing in India. Our measure of police–community relationships are a proxy for community policing with police–community relationships as the central core and guiding philosophy. Given that Indian police are expanding community policing programs around the country, as demonstrated from this research, a critical element is the importance of citizen satisfaction with the police. Police bureaucrats could take note from these findings and consider improving their police image in terms of professionalism, integrity and accountability. More importantly, they should consider communicating to the public their primary mission with emphasis on police values and conducting their work in line with the principles of rule of law, protection of human rights, and adhering to notions of democratic policing.

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